



A national program to increase fruit and vegetable consumption

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Sample The Spectrum
Color Your Diet With Spring and Summer Fruits and Vegetables

(Bethesda, MD)- It's time to get colorful, says the National Cancer Institute (NCI). With seasonal fruits and vegetables filling produce stands and farmers markets, it's the perfect time to give your health a bright and vivid multihued boost. Color your daily diet with bright oranges (carrots, mandarin oranges, sweet potatoes and mango), deep reds (tomatoes, cherries and strawberries), dark greens (broccoli, asparagus and kale), beautiful blues and purples (blueberries, eggplant and plums), and accent it with sunshine yellow (squash, pineapple and corn).

"Here's the rule to live by when filling up your plate," advises **Gloria Stables, M.S., R.D., director of the NCI's 5 A Day Program**: "Sample the spectrum. The more reds, oranges, greens, yellows, and blues you see on the plate, the more health promoting properties you are getting from your fruit and vegetable choices."

As Stables points out, aesthetics aren't the only reason to eat the rainbow of colors. Nutrition research shows that colorful fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that help prevent diseases such as cancer, promote health and help you feel great. Here are the specifics...

REDS

When you add deep reds or bright pinks to your daily diet, you are also adding a powerful antioxidant called lycopene. Lycopene is found in tomatoes, red and pink grapefruit, watermelon and guava. A diet rich in lycopene has been suggested to reduce the risk of select cancers, including prostate cancer.

The essentials: Creamy Tomato-Pepper Pasta (recipe included)

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GREENS

Your mom said, “Eat your greens.” The National Cancer Institute says, “Eat your greens.” You probably tell your family “Eat your greens.” But do you know why this color is so essential to your diet? Not only do these vegetables look great and taste wonderful, but they are rich in the phytochemicals that keep you healthy. For example, the carotenoids—lutein and zeaxanthin—that are found in spinach, collards, kale and broccoli have antioxidant properties that protect your eyes by keeping your retina strong. Also, research shows that green cruciferous vegetables (like cabbage, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, kale and turnips) may reduce the risk of cancerous tumors!

The essentials: Broccoli & Green Beans with Ginger Green Sauce (recipe included)

ORANGES

Orange, the color of a blazing sun, is a must-have in your daily diet. Orange fruits and vegetables like sweet potatoes, mangos, carrots, and apricots, include beta carotene. This carotenoid is a natural antioxidant and enhances your immune system. In addition to being a powerful health-protector, the orange group is rich in Vitamin C and Vitamin E. Folate, most often found in leafy greens, is also found in orange fruits and vegetables and is a vitamin B that may help prevent some birth defects. With a chemical make-up this good for you, the orange group should always be part of your daily diet.

The essentials: Curried Rice with Roasted Carrots and Apricots (recipe included)

YELLOW

Bright yellows have many of the same perks as the orange groups: high in essential vitamins and carotenoids. Pineapple, for example, is rich with Vitamin C, manganese, and the natural enzyme, bromelain. Bromelain is great to add to a meal to aid in digestion and reduce bloating. Additionally, corn and pears are high in fiber. Yellow fruits and vegetables belong to many different families, but they all share the common bond of health enhancing and great taste.

The essentials: Springtime Corn & Squash Soup (recipe included)

BLUES/PURPLES

Blues and purples not only add beautiful shades of tranquility and richness to your plate, they add health-enhancing flavonoids, phytochemicals, and antioxidants. Anthocyanins, a phytochemical, are pigments responsible for the blue color in fruits and vegetables, and they may help defend against harmful carcinogens. Blueberries, in particular, are rich in Vitamin C and folic acid and high in fiber and potassium.

The essentials: Fresh Berries with Sweet Vinegar Sauce (recipe included)

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SAVOR THE SPECTRUM OF THE SEASON

This is not a single-color season. When it comes to your health, you'll fare best with a multi-colored diet. By putting something of every color on your plate or in your lunch bag, you are more likely to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Think colorful: 1 cup of dark, leafy GREENS, ½ cup of RED tomatoes, ½ cup of YELLOW peppers, 6 oz. ORANGE juice and ½ cup of BLUEberries. This season, get your "5 A Day" the colorful way!

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The 5 A Day program is a joint initiative of the National Cancer Institute and the Produce for Better Health Foundation to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables to at least five servings daily for better overall health. For more recipes and ideas on how to color your daily diet with fruits and vegetables, check out the 5 A Day web site at www.5aday.gov.